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ABSTRACT

The State of New York could be considered a pioneer in the field of compensatory education. A number of programs established in the 1930s and 1940s were definitely compensatory in nature. The 1960s saw the extension of compensatory practices at the preschool and elementary levels. By the summer of 1965, over half a million children were enrolled in compensatory programs throughout the country. The introduction of the television show, "Sesame Street," extended the education of pre-schoolers by means of the media. Pre-school programs gave rise to such secondary school programs as the Upward Bound Program and the Talent Search Programs. The research literature emphasized the importance of self concept enhancement in the education of disadvantaged students. It now appears that compensatory programs have been instrumental in increasing access to educational opportunities. However, the lack of evaluative research data makes it difficult to issue a firm statement on their success. It is imperative that administrators be able to justify the continued funding of these programs. (Author/RLV)

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COMPENSATORY EDUCATION: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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COMPENSATORY EDUCATION: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the development of compensatory education from a historical perspective. The document is a descriptive narrative emphasizing the chronology of events. Attempts are therefore made to delineate the following:

- A definition of compensatory education
- A chronology of the events and circumstances that perpetrated the conceptualization of compensatory education
- A review of some of the arguments for and against compensatory education
- Some compensatory practices
- What evaluators have to say about compensatory education

COMPENSATORY FDUCATION: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

During the past decade and a half, one of the focal points in education has been the improvement of educational achievement for everyone on all levels. This involves first compensating for previous inadequacies. Programs have been established across the nation to address the needs of that group of individuals who are educationally disadvantaged (Compensatory Education Programs).

Even though the methods of dealing with this clientele vary from program to program, the clients themselves have two common characteristics (Gowan and Demos, 1966). They are as follows:

1. The client is from a lower socio-economic group.
2. The client is deficient in cultural and academic strengths.

This paper is an attempt to delineate the following:

- a definition of compensatory education
- a chronology of the events and circumstances that perpetrated the conceptualization of compensatory education
- a review of some of the arguments for and against compensatory education
- some compensatory practices
- what evaluators have to say about compensatory education

Several documents were vital to this paper. They included the case of Brown vs. Topeka, The Coleman Report, Compensatory Education For the Disadvantaged (Gordon and Wilkerson, 1966) and Cognitive Objectives in Compensatory Education (Smiley, 1967). Relevant studies between 1966 and 1977 were also reviewed. This document is a descriptive narrative emphasizing the chronology of events.

Compensatory education has been classified as special and extra services intended to compensate for a complex of social, economic and educational

handicaps suffered by disadvantaged individuals (Gordon and Wilkerson, 1966). If there are any historical events at all that could be credited with perpetrating the national interest as well as the subsequent development of programs of compensatory education, the case of Brown vs. Topeka, 1954 and The Coleman Report, 1966 would have to be the ones.

The Supreme Court concluded in 1954, that segregated education had serious effects on the "Black child's self-concept and ability to learn." James Coleman (1966) was of the same opinion when he stated that relationship between the self-concept and academic achievement of the disadvantaged was a significant one.

Attention to the needs of the disadvantaged did not begin with the civil rights movement of the sixties. These needs only became a national priority as a result of this movement. One would be less than candid, however, to down-play the role of civil disorders in the establishment of compensatory education as a national priority. Crossland (1971) gave the following list of such Civil Disorders:

1963 - Birmingham, Savannah, Cambridge (Md.), Chicago, Philadelphia

1964 - Jacksonville, Cleveland, St. Augustine, Philadelphia, Mississippi, New York, Rochester, Jersey City, Dixmoor (Chicago Suburb)

1965 - Bogalusa, (La.), Watts

1966 - Watts, Chicago, Cleveland, Baltimore

1967 - Nashville, Houston, Tampa, Cincinati, Atlanta, Newark, Detroit, Plainfield, New Brunswick (N.J.)

1968 - Assassination of Dr. King

The Freedmen's Bureau, which was initiated after the Civil War, recognized as one of its major responsibilities the development of educational facilities for former slaves (Gordon and Wilkerson, 1966). Much of the struggle for redress of the needs of the disadvantaged, took place in the Black Community itself during the late 19th and early 20th century. Conflicts existed largely

between those who would train a skilled group to work with their hands (Booker Washington), and those who would train the minds of a leadership group (W.E.B. DuBois). History shows that those who advocated the former view (the training of hands in vocational skills) finally won out, due to the accelerating industrialization of the national economy.

The depression of the thirties gave rise to the inability of the labor force to absorb school failures. This gave rise to the "separate but equal" arguments of the forties. Blacks felt that they were being short-changed by the educational systems. Ensuing events, such as the case of Brown vs. Topeka, where the Supreme Court held that segregated education had serious effects on the "Black child's self-concept and ability to learn"; and, the Coleman Report of 1966, invoked arguments both for and against the establishment of compensatory education programs. These arguments generally took place within legislative chambers and finally resulted in the passage of bills specifically in New York State enabling the development of compensatory education programs.

The State of New York could be considered, in its own right, a pioneer in the field of compensatory education. The State University of New York was established in 1948, and the preceding twenty years gave rise to four state-financed or state-administered temporary programs. The following is a list of these programs:

1. Emergency Collegiate Centers - 1933
2. Defense-Related Vocational Educational Programs - 1940
3. Institutes of Applied Arts and Science - 1946
4. Associated Colleges of Upper New York - 1946

One who has established a general definition of compensatory education might conclude that these programs were definitely compensatory in nature.

In 1956, the National Scholarship Service and Fund For Negro Students and the New York City Board co-sponsored the first compensatory project in name in

the State. This program consisted of 43 junior high schools and George Washington High. The project was called the Demonstration Guidance Project and ran from 1956-1962. Having been quite successful, it demonstrated that educational opportunity even under token situations or conditions of de facto segregation resulted in substantial gains for Negro pupils chosen from the upper 50th percentile.

Before going further, it is necessary to side-track and talk about other programs that have been compensatory in nature. The reason for doing this is because the dawn of the sixties gave a new dimension to education (compensatory practices at the pre-school and elementary levels). The following was put forth as a theoretical basis for compensatory education programs:

1. The environment in which the disadvantaged mature fails to provide many of the antecedent experiences necessary for proper neurological and psychological development.

2. Through skillful rearranging significant aspects of the child's environment (home, school, peer and adult relationships) important changes are likely to occur in his behavior and performance.

3. An intervention program to be effective must occur early in the child's life and must be maintained for several years. (Oakland, 1970)

Oakland also observed that overcrowded homes and schools decreased the opportunities both for individual attention and maximum utilization of environmental properties.

This type of thinking and philosophy gave way to a rapid generation of pre-school programs; for example, Murfreesboro, Tennessee early training program New York City Deutch Therapeutic Curriculum, Head Start Programs in cities such as Racine, Ypsilanti, Baltimore, Miami and Fresno. By the Summer of 1965 there were some 560,000 children in 13,000 centers in over 2,500 communities across the country.

Two years later another program started to evolve, Sesame Street. This program evolved through the research of Joan Ganz Cooney and was commissioned

by the Carnegie Corporation. The whole plan was centered around the feasibility of using television for the education of pre-school children. Curriculum goals of Sesame Street were developed in 1968 in the general categories of social, moral, and affective development, language and reading skills, mathematics and numerical skills, reasoning, problem solving and perception.

The research sample consisted of 943 youngsters. Of this group, 731 were classified as being disadvantaged. These youngsters were from Boston; Durham, North Carolina, Philadelphia, and Phoenix, Arizona.

The first show was aired on November 10, 1969. It was found that the disadvantaged child who regularly watched the program, showed greater gains in learning than the advantaged child who frequently watched. Such a program would definitely be considered compensatory because it "Fostered friendliness, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging." (Johnson, 1971)

Although many of the programs in the elementary and secondary levels were running simultaneously with the pre-school programs, the latter gave impetus to the former. Some of these programs are as follows:

1. Madison Project (Syracuse, New York 1962-1965) target population - a total school population of two elementary, one junior high and one senior high school.
2. Project Able - a five year program consisting of city, village, suburban and rural schools from elementary through senior high. The program consisted of small classes, remedial instruction, field trips, community resources, special parent meetings and adult education courses.

3. School Dropout Programs - 1963, set up by the late President Kennedy in 63 cities; encompassing 59,301 students and returning 51.7% to school.
4. The Job Corps was an off-shoot of the Dropout Programs.

The above are only a few of the programs; however, a comprehensive directory of Compensatory programs was published by Wilkerson and Gordon in 1966.

Programs began to appear for the purpose of preparing high school students with learning deficiencies for College. High on the list of mentionables are the Upward Bound Program and the Talent Search Program. The Upward Bound Program was begun on a national basis in June 1966 at 215 colleges, universities and residential secondary schools. Twenty thousand youngsters, most of whom had completed the 10th and 11th grades, were involved. By 1968, every state in the U.S. was participating. This encompassed some 300 institutions.

Talent Search Operations were not focused on any precise population. Such projects were expected to serve a variety of people; for example, students still in school, those who had withdrawn, and young men and women with family responsibilities. In the early seventies, President Nixon extended this to include veterans of the Vietnam War.

Cooperative College Centers - Higher Educational Opportunity Programs were not generally available to students who completed their secondary education during the 1960's and earlier. In order to bring such persons into the mainstream of the college bound, the State University of New York (S.U.N.Y.) established a network of Cooperative College Centers. These Centers combined the resources of public and private colleges within a region for the purpose of providing educational programs that prepared students for admission and matriculation as degree seeking students in public and private colleges throughout the State.

In 1969 Cooperative College Center programs were initiated in Syracuse, Wyandanch (Suffolk County), and in Mount Vernon. The success of these demonstration programs resulted in their expansion as well as the establishment of additional programs in Buffalo and Rochester, and in Westchester and Nassau Counties. The Centers served economically and educationally disadvantaged students with special educational and financial needs. Educational needs were met by means of special guidance, counseling, and remedial courses. All educational experiences were oriented around preparing students for college degree programs. Students progressed at their own rate and each Center developed its educational program according to the unique nature of the cooperating colleges and the needs in each region being served.

The Cooperative College Centers were established for the "poverty" population and were all tuition free. In some cases, small stipends were offered to cover books and supplies. In an effort to take the education to the people, Center operations were located within easy access of the poverty neighborhoods.

The Cooperative College Center of Syracuse was one of the first centers to begin operation. It was founded in February of 1969, and operated under the auspices of Upstate Medical Center; then known as the SEEK Program (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge), the Center started with a staff of nine and with less than thirty students. A broadening of the scope of activities and a shift in interest on the part of many of the students that were being served were partially responsible for a program overhaul in 1973. This overhaul resulted in a name change (Educational Opportunity Centers) and the initiation of vocational programs.

Presently, New York State is the only State that has this unique network of eight centers that are geared to meeting the educational needs of a disadvantaged adult clientele. Approximately eleven million dollars are allocated each

year to these programs by the State Legislature.

Self-Concept And Its Enhancement

The research literature recognizes the importance of self-concept enhancement in the education of disadvantaged students. Coleman (1966) reported that a control of the environment is the single variable most highly correlated with the academic achievement of disadvantaged students. Exploratory as well as evaluative efforts to enhance the self-concept of disadvantaged students have been based on the following: the regular curriculum, ancillary services (tutoring and counseling), significant others and special programs. (Zirkel, 1972)

Bitensky (1969) stated that at the core of resistance to improving the self-concept is fatalism about the future and the pervasive feeling that nothing ever changes. He gave involvement in social action as a possible remedy for this fatalistic approach. He stated that social action offers the poor man the possibility of achieving previously unattainable goals, through involvement with others. The alienated man with the poor self image ceases to depend solely on himself, he loses himself in mass action. In so doing, he rediscovers the lost self, but at a higher level of involvement. His personality becomes enriched by a myriad of new relationships, new ideas and a more hopeful outlook on life (pp. 507-508).

Coleman et al. (1966), Meyers (1966), Caplin (1968), Renbarger (1969), and Frerichs (1970) all found a significant relationship between the self-concept and academic achievement of disadvantaged students. Clark (1963), Gordon and Wilkerson (1966), Smiley (1967), Tannenbaum (1967) and Fantini and Weinstein (1968) all agreed that the enhancement of self-concept was a fundamental objective of virtually every compensatory education program. Hepner (1973) concluded that the improvement of academic skills in disadvantaged children was much more involved than just improving the self-concept.

Several researchers have studied the role of significant others in the formation of a healthy self-concept and in the development of academic skills. Sullivan (1947) and Jourard (1958) emphasized the reflected appraisals of parents, peers and teachers in helping improve academic skills. Meketon (1966) involved parents in his work with Black children and concluded that the parents had a significant effect on the integration of the self-concept. Thomas (1964) found that a program of parental involvement significantly enhanced the self-concept of low achieving students whereas programs based on counseling and presentations by outside experts did not.

Epps (1970) reported that work with parents, peers and teachers had a positive and significant impact on the self-concept of the children. Blume (1968) reported a significant relationship between the self-concept of teachers and that of their students. He concluded that if one wants to develop children with high self-esteem, he/she should first provide them with teachers who have high self-esteem.

Effectiveness of Compensatory Education Programs

Huge sums of money have been spent on compensatory education programs. Given the present state of the economy, questions pertaining to the effectiveness of these programs are now being raised. Sherman and Tinto (1975) stated that most of the studies involving these programs possess serious methodological weaknesses. The results do suggest, however, that the programs have had a positive impact on the number of people finishing high school, the number of people applying to and enrolling in college and the number of people graduating from college. A positive impact in areas of academic values, attitudes and motivation has been observed.

The alleviation of the gap in academic achievement between participants and non-participants or disadvantaged and advantaged students has not been

radically affected. These programs were characterized by Tinto and Sherman as working on a "deficit" model when provisions for counseling and supportive services along with cultural activities were utilized. The major focus of these programs has been in the development of mathematics and reading skills. This approach is evident in programs such as SEEK, Upward Bound, Talent Search and College Preparatory Programs at the Educational Opportunity Centers.

Where intervention programs were applied early and consistently, the effectiveness in terms of enhancement of attitudes and motivation increased. Coleman (1966) stated that the average minority scores lower on tests of verbal ability at every grade level and without intervention the disparity between children of different social classes becomes larger at higher grade levels. The aim of compensatory education then is to reverse this trend.

Efforts at the college level have relied heavily on financial assistance, counseling, tutoring, cultural enrichment and remedial instruction. According to Sherman and Tinto, these programs have had little impact upon the structure of the target schools in terms of administrative structures, values and behaviors of the regular teaching staff and on going instructional techniques.

The most promising results have been realized from these programs which were comprehensive in scope, based on ethnic pride and housed in institutions that were fully committed to improving the plight of the educationally disadvantaged. (Gordon, 1975) and Murray (1976). Murray cited the University of Wisconsin as being one of the most successful educational opportunity programs in the nation. This success was attributed to those characteristics cited above. Fiske (1976) probably made the case for compensatory education better than anyone else in the field. He stated that the fact that these programs have propelled even a minority of participants into the mainstream of American middle class life makes them worthwhile.

Crossland (1971) listed a number of barriers to higher education opportunities.

If one were to examine these from the perspective of how compensatory education programs have removed or eliminated them, one would find a less than impressive track record. Such barriers include the lack of ability, the test battery, the lack of sufficient finances, lack of motivation and the racial barrier.

Summary

It appears that compensatory education programs have been instrumental in increasing access to educational opportunities for a number of disadvantaged students. The lack of evaluative research data makes it difficult, however, to issue a firm statement on the success of these programs.

The research literature shows that programs beyond the secondary level that were comprehensive in scope and were institutionalized by the sponsoring institution, tended to be more successful. Students persisted longer and made notable achievements in terms of cognitive development and improvement in self-concept.

Large sums of money have been spent on these programs, and it will become more and more imperative that administrators are in a position to justify this continued funding. This is due in large part to a shrinking American economy. Longitudinal studies that employ cost-benefit-analysis techniques are needed along with evaluative research data from a curriculum perspective. Such efforts would help to identify what can and should be done for disadvantaged students, along with the costs involved.

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